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Tiles and Tinctures: Interdependent Co-creativity in Early Modern English Literature

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The social nature of early modern authorship has met with increasing attention in recent years.[1] It not only comprises co-authorship in the narrow sense, e.g. of several playwrights working together, but also, to give just one other example, the co-creative involvement of several agents, such as compilers, printers and editors in the production of books: they bring forth and jointly create an aesthetic act or artefact. While this fact has been widely acknowledged, we still need to show why it makes sense to speak of "co-creativity," especially since "creativity" and "creative" are terms rarely used for anyone but God before the eighteenth century (see *OED*). Even though the notion of the *poeta creator* was extant since antiquity,[2] it seems plausible to use the term for the early modern period not so much with the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* in mind, but in the sense of *making* something. To *co-create*, as we suggest using the term, then simply means working and making something together, or, in Sir Philip Sidney's and Arthur Golding's rendering of Philippe de Mornay, "ioyntworking" (1587/1976: 64). Intriguingly, the expression, "les actions conioinctes" in de Mornay's original

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1 See e.g. Stillinger (1991), Woodmansee (1994), Inge (2001), North (2003), Cheney (2008 & 2018); for the realm of drama in particular, see Masten (1997), Vickers (2002), Jowett (2013), van Es (2013).

2 See, e.g., Lieberg (1982).

(1581: 88), is used for the activity of the Holy Trinity, in which understanding, will, and love come together, which takes us back full circle to divine creativity.

While we thus speak of co-creativity in a very general sense, we also strive to get an idea of how its manifestations can be conceptualized. To us, one of the notions applied most fruitfully is that of interdependence, which means the mutual dependence of agents and their products in a co-creative process. Such an interdependence is to be viewed in distinction from an additive perspective that frequently underlies the idea of co-authorship, e.g. in stylometric approaches to authorship identification and attribution (see, e.g., Bauer & Zirker, 2018). These assume that multiple authorship is to be understood as the sum of individual authorships that can be identified on the basis of style. The conceptual problem of such an approach becomes evident if one takes into account that authorship is not identical with stylistic form(ation), which means that essential components in the production of aesthetic acts and artefacts are left unconsidered: the choice of subject matter or topic, the invention of action and character, arrangement of parts, relationship of invention and material realization, etc.

Interdependence marks the interplay of such components; it denotes a particular kind of relationship between those involved in the creative process and equally says something about the features of the aesthetic product. Of course, mutuality is also implied in any notion of additive co-authorship: whoever writes the second act of a play depends on the events of the first act, and, conversely, the author of act one needs to know how the story will continue. The focus on additive co-authorship, however, hides exactly this dimension of interaction – and thus one of the most telling aspects of co-authorship and co-creativity.

Interdependence is a covert concept lacking explicit discussion in poetics and aesthetics. We suggest, however, that it is nevertheless reflected on in artefacts and can be read off literary production processes. In what follows, we will use exactly these two approaches – production and reflection – to show how interdependence comes to the fore: in one case, interdependence emerges in an intermedial and intersemiotic process in Geffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes* (1586); in the second example, "The Elixer" from George Herbert's *The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations* (1633), an interdependent relationship is addressed with regard to the meaning of human actions and, in the end, poetic creation.

Geffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes*: Co-creative Practice

In his emblem, "Mutuum Auxilium" (Whitney, 1586/1988: 65; fig. 1), Whitney puts interdependence in a nutshell[3]: it shows how "The blynde did beare the lame uppon his backe," i.e. how mutual support consists in each participant depending on the faculties of the other. The blind man who is strong and can walk well relies on the seeing man whom he supports because his mobility is impaired. Together they reach their goal. This configuration may be interpreted as an allegory of the artistic collaboration in producing an intermodal emblem: the forward movement in space and time that is characteristic of a verbal text is combined with the visuality of the *picture*; language and image together reach the (mostly moral) goal of the emblem.[4] The pictorial artist contributes the eyes, so to speak, and the poet the feet; in combination, the aesthetic aim (cf. the outstretched hand) will be reached. This emblematic connection is frequently established in the form of mutual dependence: the image is not specific enough without the text, and the text is not evident enough without the image.[5] Paradoxically, text and image can therefore make a concise point by existing together rather than alone.



Mutuum auxilium. 65

To R. COTTON *Esquier.*

THE blynde, did beare the lame vppon his backe,
The burthen, did directe the bearers waies:
With mutuall helpe, they serv'd eche others lacke,
And euery one, their frendly league did praise:
The lame lente eies, the blynde did lend his feete,
And so they safe, did passe both feelde, and streete.

Some lande aboundes, yet hathe the same her wante,
Some yeeldes her lacke, and wantes the others store:
No man so ritche, but is in some thinge scante,
The greate estate, must not dispise the poore:
Hee workes, and toyles, and makes his showlders beare,
The ritche agayne, giues foode, and clothes, to weare.

So without poore, the ritche are like the lame:
And without ritche, the poore are like the blynde:
Let ritche lend eies, the poore his legges wil frame,
Thus shoulde yt bee. For so the Lorde allign'd,
Whoe at the firste, for mutuall frendship sake,
Not all gaue one, but did this difference make.

Whereby, with trade, and intercourse, in space,
And borrowinge heare, and lendinge there agayne:
Such loue, such truthe, such kyndnes, shoulde take place,

I. That

Fig. 1: Whitney, G. (1586): "Mutuum auxilium," in: *A Choice of Emblemes and Other Devises*, Leyden, Christopher Plantin, p. 65, Pennsylvania State University, Special Collections Library, https://digital.libraries.psu.edu/digital/collection/emblem/id/386.

3 See the forthcoming paper by Bauer, Briest, Rogalski & Zirker.

4 Cf. Silcox (1993: 172), who points out "the difference between an emblematist such as Alciato, writing without the *picturae* which were added by later printers, and Whitney, writing with pre-existing *picturae* in front of him": "the care Whitney generally takes to match his *subscriptio* to the *pictura* closes the gap between what is presented in each component of his emblem, redirecting attention from the emblem as enigma to the emblem as lesson." For a discussion about whether the "relationship between picture and word" is "necessary and inherent," see Daly (1972: 54-55), who criticizes Schöne's assumption of a "priority of the image" ("Priorität des Bildes," 1993: 26).

5 Cf. Gower as Chorus in Shakespeare's (et al.) *Pericles*: "What's dumb in show I'll plain with speech" (III, 0, 14). See also Chardin (2004: 116) for the opacity and transparency combined in the emblem.

The interdependence of text and image is also involved in the creation process, the performative act of emblem production. Whitney provides ample examples of this as he is both strongly receptive and productive in changing and modifying what he receives. Whitney's emblem book was deemed rather unimportant for quite a long time because he was (in the wake of a Romantic aesthetics of the creative genius) considered unoriginal; apparently, he only imitated and compiled the emblems of others, mainly those of Alciato, the most widely read book of emblems. This view has been revised in consideration of his own textual strategies,[6] and we hope to show that his aesthetic contribution no less consists in his interaction with the images. Whitney's most important co-creator, one might hence argue, was the printing workshop of Plantin in Leyden where he spent some time accompanying the Earl of Leicester in the spring of 1586 (see, e.g., Tung, 1976: 35-37). There he selected a number of extant woodcuts (see Whitney, 1586/1988). A year earlier, Whitney had created a manuscript collection of emblems for his patron in which the images had been copied by hand from printed books.[7] But now several readers of that manuscript had asked for a printed version of it, and Whitney had to take recourse to printing material that had been used before. Whereas Whitney had been able to adapt the images to the written text in the manuscript, this was impossible when using extant wood blocks.[8]

A telling example of Whitney's method is the emblem with the motto "Semper praesto esse infortunia" ("…hand"; 'Misfortunes are always at hand'; Whitney, 1586/1988: 176; fig. 2), which shows three ladies playing dice. The middle figure points above with the index finger of her left hand, while the figure on the right seems to follow the gesture with her gaze. The first stanza of the *subscriptio* reads as follows:

> Three carelesse dames, amongste their wanton toies,
> Did throwe the dice, who firste of them shoulde die:
> And shee that loste, did laughe with inwarde joyes,

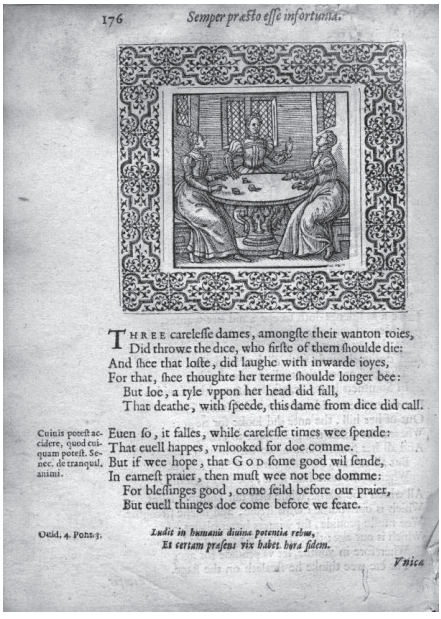
6 Freeman (1948/1967) speaks of "a complete absence of originality" (56). See Manning (1990: 156) for a "reassessment" of this view; see also Silcox (1993: 161).

7 The dedication of the manuscript to the Earl of Leicester points to a social dimension that can also be regarded as a form of interdependence: the manuscript depends on its dedicatee for its existence, whereas the printed book, with its dedications of individual emblems to a number of persons—"Mutuum auxilium," for example, is dedicated to "R[ichard]. Cotton Esquier"—suggests that it creates and informs a network of individuals who support an ideal commonwealth "of social trust and cooperation" (Silcox, 1993: 185). See also Clement (2019: 450): "While Whitney's anthology can be understood as hyper-masculine militaristic propaganda [as claimed, e.g., by Manning, 1990: 162], the anthology is also concerned with friendship and social networking, featuring hundreds of dedications within the book"; Clement here also refers to the *album amicorum* (450).

8 See Clement (2019: 437) on the "highly complex pattern of transmission and production of material within emblem books".

For that, shee thoughte her terme shoulde longer bee:
But loe, a tyle uppon her head did fall,
That deathe, with speede, this dame from dice did call.

What every reader notices at once: the tile that falls on the woman's head is nowhere to be seen, although there is an obvious deixis in the text: "loe—a tyle uppon her head did fall"! Whitney's text at first widely follows Alciato (see Tung, 1976: 84 and 86) who, in turn, follows the *Greek Anthology*: he showed the same image in the 1577 edition used by Whitney and added the text "Cum subito icta cuput labente est mortua tecto" ('When suddenly her head is deadly hit by the collapsing roof'). In the *Greek Anthology* (9.158), the poor woman falls off the roof, not the roof onto her.


176 *Semper præſto eſſe infortunia.*

THREE careleſſe dames, amongſte their wanton toies,
Did throwe the dice, who firſte of them ſhoulde die:
And ſhee that loſte, did laughe with inwarde ioyes,
For that, ſhee thoughte her terme ſhoulde longer bee:
But loe, a tyle vppon her head did fall,
That deathe, with ſpeede, this dame from dice did call.

Cuinis poteſt accidere, quod cuiquam poteſt. Senec. de tranquil. animi.

Euen ſo, it falles, while careleſſe times wee ſpende:
That euell happes, vnlooked for doe comme.
But if wee hope, that GOD ſome good wil ſende,
In earneſt praier, then muſt wee not bee domme:
For bleſſinges good, come ſeild before our praier,
But euell thinges doe come before we feare.

Ouid. 4. Pont. 3.

Ludit in humanis diuina potentia rebus,
Et certam præſens vix habet hora fidem.

Vnica

Fig. 2: Whitney, G. (1586): "Semper praesto esse infortunia," in: *A Choice of Emblemes and Other Devises*, Leyden, Christopher Plantin, p. 176, Pennsylvania State University, Special Collections Library, https://digital.libraries.psu.edu/digital/collection/emblem/id/497.

Thus Whitney's text in particular adds meaning to the image that it lacks without it. To put this in terms of co-creativity: with regard to the emblem as a whole, the work of the visual artist presupposes the work of the writer. But, and this is essential, the reverse is true, too: the image is the reason for Whitney's text being what it is. This is where interdependence comes in. We see this more clearly when we consider that Whitney adds a second stanza that does not exist in Alciato (but responds to the *Anthologia Graeca* poem).

Even so, it falles, while carelesse times wee spende:
That evell happes, unlooked for doe comme.
But if wee hope, that GOD some good wil sende,
In earnest praier, then must wee not bee domme:
For blessinges good, come seild before our praier,
But evell thinges doe come before we feare.

This turn to a religious meaning is new—and not easily understood at that. A simple moral-religious reading would be to understand the text as a warning not to spend time carelessly but in prayer. But we think that this emblem and its

interpretation is more complex, and that God's "blessings good" are as little to be influenced (through prayer) or predicted as are "evell thinges". Such a reading would also fit Whitney's protestant background much better. Hence the poem spells out what the *pictura* shows: the warning not to be dumb and forget the higher sphere which may have good in store for us. The middle figure's gesture suggests such a reading; this interpretation even appears to be more probable than to read the gesture as pointing to the falling tile: in the latter case, the lady stays slightly too calm. Which is to say: the underspecification of the image that delimits the topics at issue but does not spell them out is the basis of the double statement of the text which warns us that both good and evil may await us; we should be attentive even though neither prayer nor fear can bring them about or avert them. The quotation from Ovid underneath the poem underscores this impression: "Ludit in humanis divina potentia rebus, et certam præsens vix habet hora fidem" ('a divine power plays with human affairs, and one can hardly trust the current hour'; *Ex Ponto* IV.iii.46-50).[9]

The artist of the image and the poet did not co-create this emblem together and simultaneously[10]: Whitney found a text-image combination and allowed it to determine the framework of his (new) text while, at the same time, he made the picture more plausible. It is interesting to note that Whitney did not add a tile in his manuscript drawing either but left this identical with the woodcut, which means that he preferred the image that allowed him to add a religious interpretation of the gesture which is absent from Alciato's text.[11]

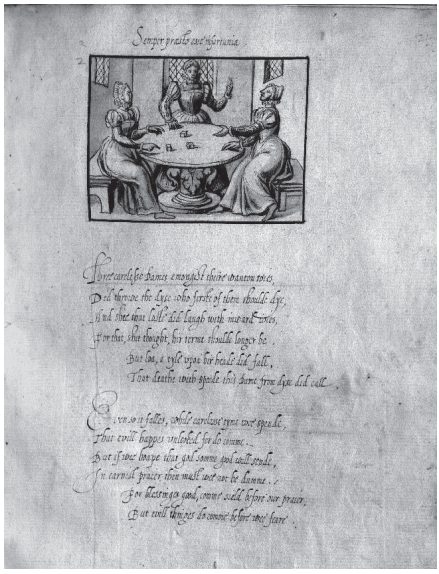


Fig. 3: Whitney, G. (1585): "Semper praesto esse infortunia," *A Choice of Emblemes: Manuscript*, MS Typ 14, Houghton Library, Harvard University, folio 22r.

But where does the tile in Whitney's text come from? The answer can be found by a brief glimpse at yet another performative dimension of this co-creative act. While the image in the 1577 Alciato edition used by

9 See Tung (1991) on Whitney's uses of Ovid.

10 See Manning (2004: 82) on the creation of emblems: "The generation of new emblems came from a combination of sources that arose from the necessity of collaboration at various levels between author, printer, artist, editor and publisher."

11 We would like to thank Houghton Library at Harvard for providing us with the MS image.

Whitney does not show the misfortune, there are other extant editions, namely those of 1547, 1556, 1583, 1615 and 1621, that show in two different variants how one of the women is indeed hit by a tile falling off the roof (see Tung, n.d. https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/tung/alciatotungedition-130.pdf). The pictura in the editions of 1547, 1556, and 1583 looks like this (Fig. 4).

As, unlike Alciato, Whitney does not generally speak of "tectum" (roof) but of "tile," we may therefore assume that he also knew this image, which means that he had studied at least one more edition of Alciato, but did choose not to use it.[12] He selected the image that allowed him to add the dimension of divine predestination that is non-existent in Alciato's text. In other words: he strategically selected that contribution by a pictorial artist which allowed him to demonstrate the interdependence of image and text,[13] very much alike to and yet different from the allegorical message of "Mutuum auxilium."


EMBL. LIB. I. 83

Semper præſto eſſe infor-
tunia. XLVII.

Ludebant parili tres olim etate puellæ
Sortibus, ad Stygias quæ prior iret aquas.
Aſt cui iactato malè ceſſerat alea talo,
Ridebat ſortis cæca puella ſuæ:
Cùm ſubitò ictta caput labente eſt mortua tecto,
Soluit & audacis debita fata ioci.
Rebus in aduerſis mala ſors non fallitur: aſt in
Fauſtis, nec precibus, nec locus eſt manui.

COMMENTARIA.

Tres olim eiuſdem ætatis puellæ, talis, ſeu
ſorte ludebant, quænam illarum prior more-
f 2 retur,

Fig. 4: Alciato, A., "Semper praesto esse infortunia," in: *Emblematum* libri II, Lyons, Jean de Tournes and Guillaume Gazeau, 1556, emblem 47, p. 83, https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/picturae.php?id=A56a047. By permission of University of Glasgow, Archives & Special Collections, SM36, f2 r.

12 See Tung (1976: 36) on Whitney's use of sources, especially for the printed version.

13 See also Daly (1993, 30): "the emblem communicates simultaneously through word and pictures. These two different symbol systems collaborate in the production of meaning. The reciprocal cross-referencing of text and image in the act of reading suggests that the picture is more than a mere illustration." See also Chardin (2004 & 2009) on the interplay of image and text. In the context of Tomaso Garzoni's *imprese*, Calabritto (2003, 104) notes "a correspondence between image and motto": "the two parts complement each other, even though the motto seems simply to paraphrase the image". She goes on to refer to Girolamo Ruscelli and his view "that the *anima* of an emblem […] is the combined result of painting and poetry, so that the one interprets the other" (Calabritto 2003: 123; the reference is to Possevino 1607: 480: "picturam & poesim, ut altera sit alterius interpretes"). "For Possevino (481), the two sections of the impresa are no longer image and motto, but become metaphors for painting and poetry, which interpret and influence each other" (Calabritto, 2003: 123). See also Silcox (2008: 283): "The three parts of Whitney's emblems—motto, picture, and epigram […]—thus create something of a puzzle or mystery to be solved by the reader's interacting with the total of the parts, no one of which contains the entirety of the emblem's message."

George Herbert, "The Elixer": Reflecting Co-creation

Our second example, George Herbert's poem, is about seeing God in the daily activities in life:

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see,
And what I do in any thing,
To do it as for thee:

Not rudely, as a beast,
To runne into an action;
But still to make thee prepossest,
And give it his perfection.

A man that looks on glasse,
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it passe,
And then the heav'n espie.

All may of thee partake:
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with his tincture (for thy sake)
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgerie divine:
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for lesse be told.

The speaker of the poem wishes to do profane things in the right spirit to make sure that everything he does, he does for God. Such an attitude allows to "make drudgerie divine," to turn even the meanest occupation into a sacred service. Remarkably, this action, i.e. to turn worldly matters into something divine, is attributed both to God and the human being; what is more: both are being represented as interdependent in their creative endeavour. This interdependence is both paradoxical and provocative in the context of religious poetry. But "The

Elixer" is not only an example of early modern English poetry that foregrounds the interdependence of human being and God in reflections on co-creativity: it also shows in an exemplary manner that this interdependence defines and constitutes co-creativity.

The interdependent relationship begins to unfold in the poem's first line, "Teach me, my God and King," as it makes clear that all the speaker's actions that follow in the next seven lines depend on whether God grants his prayer or not. If so, the speaker will be able to see God in "all things" (2), do everything he does "as for [God]," be deliberate in his actions (5-6), "make [God] prepossest" (7), and thereby "give" his actions "perfection" (8). The action that stands out most is that of the speaker "mak[ing] [God] prepossest" (7). The provocation lies in the authority the speaker asserts: he suggests that man can determine God's ownership. This is explained in the third stanza, where the speaker uses the choice one can make when looking at a glass, i.e. to look through it or to look at it, namely oneself, to exemplify the choice of making God the prior owner of one's actions. The analogy to making God the prepossessor of one's actions is to decide to look through the glass in order to see heaven. The "heav'n" (12) one can "espie" through the glass is there anyway, but it requires a human act to establish the fact.[14] This step in the creative process of turning mundane things divine is made more intricate by the fact that the speaker can only attribute ownership to God if God taught him to do so in the first place. There are numerous entangled interdependencies the first two stanzas reflect on: the speaker depends on God teaching him to make God the prepossessor of all actions, God's ownership is portrayed as dependent on the speaker's choice (to attribute ownership to God, but also to ask God for his knowledge in the first place), and all actions depend on God and speaker to collaborate for them to become more than mundane.[15]

The complexity of these interactions finds reflection in the poem's tendency to ambiguous pronouns. The first and most puzzling instance of such an ambiguity occurs in line 8 when his own endeavours and God's teaching lead to the speaker "giv[ing] [the action] *his* perfection" (emphasis added). It may be assumed that "his" refers to God as the speaker has just pointed out that all comes from him. This means that the speaker does not address God directly in the second person anymore in line 8 but decides to refer to him in the third person. This pronoun change has been interpreted variously in the literature on "The Elixer". Miller, for

14 We think that the requirement of human agency is somewhat obscured by Benet's paraphrase: "[t]o see God 'in all things' and to do all things for him would be to experience and respond to the reality of his constant presence" (Benet, 1984: 186).

15 Benet does not spell out the interdependence of co-creativity implied in Herbert's choice of words but perceives a less entangled combination of "two elements: man's conscious desire 'to do [any thing] as for [God's] sake,' and God's power and willingness when he 'favours any action' ('Praise (III)') to perfect it. The speaker's request to be taught to provide his share of the elixir is a reminder that grace gives him even the ability to cooperate with it." (1984: 187).

example, claims that "perfection" is attributed to Jesus as he would conventionally be linked with the Philosopher's Stone (Miller, 1998).[16] The problem with Miller's reading is that while the association of the "perfection" with Jesus is reasonable, it does not resolve the ambiguity that has been pointed out by Leimberg (2002: 457): the direct addressee of the poem, "my God and King," could be Jesus just as well as God. In the context of alchemical images within the poem that are ascribed to God but also the human being, this pronoun change in line 8 rather refers to the fact that the poem does not describe an interaction in terms of an additive process and clear attributions as to who contributes what.

The pronoun change accordingly has two functions: on the one hand, it expresses a change in the communicative situation between lines 1 to 7 and line 8. Preceding line 8, the speaker asks God directly for his teaching. By means of a hypothetical scenario it is then shown what would happen if God really were to teach the speaker, and as of line 8, the speaker conveys what it means to see God in all things and to do all for him. After making God "prepossest" in line 7, which means after deciding to look "through" the glass "to espie heav'n" and God in all his actions, the speaker focuses on the effect it has on human acts and artefacts when God is their foundation.

On the other hand, the pronoun change implies that the alchemical images (which are used metaphorically in the context of this process) express the interdependence of actions human and divine. The "tincture" that changes all belongs to God ("his"); at the same time, it designates the human attitude to do something for God, "for thy sake". It is this attitude which then "is the famous stone," and this stone, in the poem's concluding lines, turns out to be God himself. God's actions and actions for the sake of God are thus shown as a unity on the basis of referential ambiguity.[17] The reader, however, is also given an important hint as to how to read these referential ambiguities: the title of the poem itself,

16 See also Linden (1984), who analyses the "marked and general change" alchemical images and their function underwent in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, i.e. how there emerged a "tradition […] of poetic imagery which represent[ed] a fusion of alchemy and eschatology" (79) as well as DeVun (2007: 251-261), DeVun (2009: 109-16), McGrath (2018/2019: 114-116), who focus on the analogy of Christ as the philosopher's stone. Linden also points out that in Herbert's "Easter," "Christ is portrayed as a transmuting agent, who, through his death, acquired the potency to purify the baser bodies that he chooses to touch." (1984: 82).

17 In his analysis of the philosopher's stone in "The Elixer," Mascetti adamantly downplays man's contribution and attributes "the famous stone" only to God (2007: 311-319), claiming that "Herbert's editing of the first stanza demonstrates a clear need to redirect the emphasis from man's actions, *a posteriori* referred and marked with God's imprimatur, to God's will" (315). Other scholars who have applied themselves to examining the manuscript revisions of "The Elixer" (e.g., Rickey, 1966: 118-120, Molesworth 1972, Lull, 1990: 94-100) have, however, mostly underlined that the final poem foregrounds a more active and contributing speaker (see Stein, 1968: 140).

"The Elixer," refers to the fact that it is the *whole* that turns things into gold.[18] Which is to say that the title reflects that a distinction of contributions to the creative process is neither possible nor necessary as it is the very interdependence of the contributors which produces the tincture that turns things into gold. Inge Leimberg (2002: 456-458) has shown that the title is iconic of the alchemical process described in the poem: "Elixer" is a composite anagram of *Eli* (God) and *rex* (King), which anticipates the apostrophe of the first line ("my God and King"). By joining the procedures of combination and inversion, the title thus reflects the very process of interdependent co-creation presented in the poem while stressing God's omnipotence.

The title hence makes plain that the focus in this process does not lie on the addition of individual parts but on their interdependence which brings forth a joint whole. Moreover, the title describes the artefact that is in front of us, meaning the poem itself: as the poem carries the name of the act, it allows to draw poetological conclusions from the reflection of creative processes. On a conceptual level, one may therefore conclude that creativity here is understood in terms of a process of change, and "co" in the sense of a high degree of interdependence between the contributors.

Concluding Remarks

In the case of Whitney's emblems, the texts from Alciato (and others) form the basis of the interaction with images; Whitney demonstrates the interdependence of image and text by using extant images and writing new texts – and thus changes the meaning of the images. In the case of Herbert's sacred poetry, the

18 Since in "each of Herbert's poems […] the title is an essential part of the poetic message, and in many cases it is, to put it metaphorically, the germ as well as the quintessence of the poem" (Bauer, 1995: 103), and since this poem's title is in fact a synonym for "quintessence" ("elixir, *n*." *OED* 3.b), many scholars have discussed its meaning throughout the years. Weil, for instance, gives four possible meanings: "It may refer, in addition to the 'stone' or alchemical processes, to a drug or essence which prolongs life indefinitely, to a 'strong extract or tincture' (including a quintessence, soul, or kernel), and to a pharmaceutical concoction" (Weil 2010: 250). Molesworth, in a vein similar to our approach, focusses on the alchemical meaning and the poem's contexts to comprehend why Herbert changed the title from "Perfection" in his final version of the poem: "The first version creates a matrix that is similar to that of master and servant relationships which are characteristic of the Old Testament theology. In 'The Elixir,' the title itself, borrowed from alchemy, and suggesting change, implies an altered relationship between God and man. The poem in its final form looks toward the almost mystical vision that closes the main section of *The Temple,* where the Christian is seen as a guest of Christ" (Molesworth 1972: 13). His reference to "Love (III)" and his hypothesis that the title is informative of the close relationship between God and man complements our reading of "The Elixer": God and man cannot be separated in this poem and in their joint undertaking of making "drudgeries divine".

speaker's utterance turns out to be paradoxical: the latter becomes the former, the human agent makes God own his actions before they are performed, and the interdependence consists in the human decision to bring about what conditions it. In both cases, we see that co-creativity may still exist even when there is only one human agent immediately involved in the production of the artefact. Thus, in "The Elixer," the human speaker's perspective is essential: in the process of reflection, God becomes an agent; by installing and recognizing God as the originator, the human being can act correctly and, at the same time, bring forth a poem. Similarly and differently, the emblem author appropriates something that is changed by its being recognized and installed as the premise of his own creative practice.[19] In this context, co-creativity may be understood as a model of agency, since it is not about the mere existence and use of contributions by different authors but about aesthetic production as processes of change; "to do it as for thee," as the speaker expresses this in Herbert's poem. Hence, the idea of co-creativity makes us aware of the social aspect implied in the very process of bringing about a work/artefact.

In both cases, chronology is also relevant; which is to say that co-creative processes need not be conceived of in terms of linearity. The notion of interdependence thus adds to the prevalent concept of imitation in the early modern period, i.e. the inclusion and transformation of sources. In this perspective we realize that also the later element becomes a precondition of the earlier one, i.e. that it is not only dependent on but also determines the existence and peculiarity (meaning, function, perception…) of the earlier element in the overall context of the act or artefact. The analysis of interdependence accordingly also teaches us something about the processes involved in the creation of aesthetic acts and artefacts (composition in the widest sense) and, concurrently, about the social practices of creativity.

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19 The emblem author's interaction with the woodcuts and images, as distinct from a personal interaction with the visual artists, may thus be regarded as a case in point of the agency of things that has been discussed in recent years; see e.g. Jurkowlaniec, Matyjaszkiewicz & Sarnecka, 2017.

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